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Pavak

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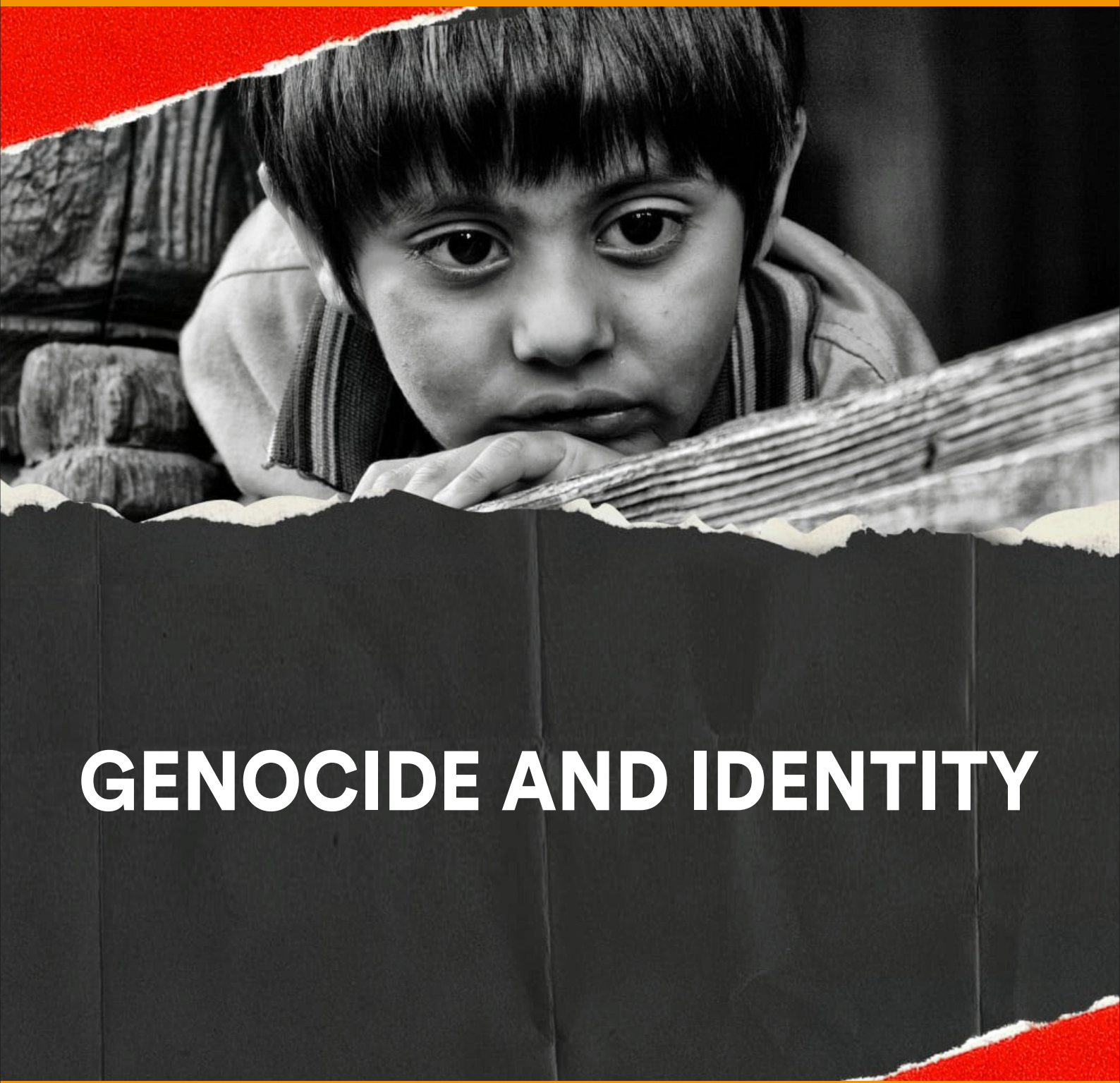

GENOCIDE AND IDENTITY

Unravelling: Identity Trap, Identity Games & Genocide in Kashmir

अपथ्याशीवबालःसामन्तसहितस्ततः।
जनानाम जातिविध्वंसे सूहभट्टः कृतोद्यमः।

- Pandit Jonaraja, Father of Genocide Studies

Pandit Jonaraja, the author of second Rajtarangini that follows the Rajtarangini of Kalhan, was a Kashmiri Shaivite Bhatta Brahmin. His real name was Jyotsanakar, meaning the creator of moonlight. This poetic name was true to his being. He was an exceptional and sensitive poet, well versed in history, astrology, Ayurveda, Yoga and subtler aspects of all these disciplines. He was a renowned Sanskrit scholar. His year of birth as per the records available is estimated as 1389-90.

Like Kalhan he has written the history of Kashmir in poetry. That is not all there is about him. He has recorded the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits in detail and delineated its aspects like the present day genocide scholars.

Jati Vidhwans—this is the word Jonaraja has coined to describe genocide. He has defined genocide and his definition almost mirrors the definition given by Raphael Lemkin. He has even pointed out the special intent that motivates the perpetrator and given a very sensitive and vivid account of how an ideology radicalises a regime and effects a total change in its mode of operation that leads to genocide. He has made it clear that the mind of a perpetrator is at a very low level of maturity. That is the view held by present day genocide scholars also. He has defined genocide and his definition is almost equal to the definition given by Raphael Lemkin. His account of the first exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, if placed in correct context, is no different from the atrocities the community faced in 1990.

Roots of the field of genocide studies are found in Pandit Jonaraja. He in every sense is "**Father of Genocide Studies**."

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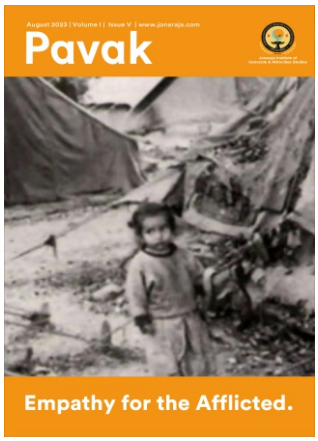

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Genocide and identity conflict

Genocides frequently involve the eradication of culturally significant landmarks, organizations, and customs related to the targeted identity. Any traces of the group's identity and history are meant to be completely erased.

Sunanda Vashisht
Editor-in-Chief, Pavak

Genocide does not suddenly confront us. No genocide is ever sudden. Identity conflict sets it up, escalating from anything ranging between social tension to political instability and ultimately to targeted mass murder.

Identity is the collection of qualities and attributes that characterize an individual and shape how they view themselves. It is a multifaceted idea that encompasses numerous facets of a person's or a group's sense of identity. There are many different kinds of identity. Personal identity refers to the distinctive traits and characteristics that set one person apart from others. Personality traits, preferences, experiences, and personal history are all components of one's identity. The groups that a person identifies with and belongs to comprise their social identity. These divisions may be made on the basis of traits like socioeconomic class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and others. Social identity frequently affects how people interact and react to one another. A cultural group's shared ideas, values, customs, languages, and activities are referred to as its cultural identity. It significantly influences how someone perceives the world and moves through their environment.

The feeling of belonging to a particular ethnic group is referred to by the term "ethnic identity," which is closely related to "cultural identity." It takes into account elements like shared ancestry, history, language, and cultural customs. A person's affiliation with a specific nation or country is referred to as having a national identity. It frequently entails a sense of allegiance and devotion to the history, culture, and ideals of the country.

A person's association with a particular religion or belief system is a key component of their religious identity. It can affect someone's moral convictions, sense of purpose, and values. In the modern era, digital identity has become increasingly relevant. It encompasses how individuals present themselves online, including their social media presence, online activities, and virtual interactions. These different types of identity are interconnected and can overlap, creating complex and multifaceted senses of self. It's important to recognize that identities are not fixed and can evolve over time based on personal experiences, interactions, and societal changes.

When identity becomes a central aspect of a person's or group's sense of self, it can have both positive and negative impacts on conflict dynamics. Identity can become a significant factor in driving and shaping conflicts. While it can exacerbate tensions and contribute to violence, it can also be a source of resilience, unity, and a foundation for building inclusive societies. Understanding the role of identity is crucial for addressing the root causes of conflicts and fostering sustainable peace.

Genocide studies confirms that genocide frequently targets certain groups based on identification traits like ethnicity, religion, nationality, or other cultural or social qualities. There is a definite connection between genocide and identity. In numerous respects, identity is crucial to the processes of genocide:

Targeted Groups : Genocides usually aim to wipe out or severely weaken particular identity-based groups. These groups can be categorized according to their ethnicity, religion, race, or nationality. These groups are seen as distinct by the offenders or as a danger to their own identity or dominance.

Dehumanization: Genocide perpetrators frequently use dehumanizing language and behavior to present the targeted people as less than human. This makes it simpler for them to defend the atrocities and violence carried out against the group.

Divisive Propaganda: Inflaming identity conflicts frequently entails disseminating information that paints one group as a danger to the life or well-being of the other. To incite fear and hatred, this can involve emphasizing past wrongs, employing insulting language, and disseminating misleading information.

Identity as a Motive: Conflicts and divisions stemming from one's identity can serve as a catalyst for genocides. These distinctions can be used to argue for the eradication of a particular identity, whether it be because of historical grievances, geographical disputes, or ideological motivations.

Identity as a Marker: Members of the targeted group can be recognized by identity markers like ethnicity, religion, or language. This makes it simpler for the offenders to identify and track down members of that group to persecute.

Cultural Erasure: Genocides frequently involve the eradication of culturally significant landmarks, organizations, and customs related to the targeted identity. Any traces of the group's identity and history are meant to be completely erased.

Forced Assimilation: Genocidal acts can include efforts to compel members of the targeted group to adopt the dominant identity. This could entail imposing a different religion, forbidding the use of their language, or changing cultural norms.

Identity Long-Term Effects: Genocide survivors' and their descendants' identities may be profoundly and permanently altered. Trauma, displacement, and the loss of cultural legacy can all have a profound effect on how people and communities view themselves.

In this edition of Pavak we will take a deep dive into the interplay between genocide and identity and why understanding of identity and classification is important to understand genocide.

When communication breaks down and diplomatic efforts fail, the likelihood of violence increases. Absence of platforms for meaningful dialogue and mediation can make it difficult to address grievances and find non-violent solutions. Preventing identity conflicts from escalating into genocide requires a multifaceted approach, involving diplomacy, education, awareness campaigns, international cooperation, and efforts to promote tolerance and understanding among different groups.

A person's association with a particular religion or belief system is a key component of their religious identity. It can affect someone's moral convictions, sense of purpose, and values. In the modern era, digital identity has become increasingly relevant. It encompasses how individuals present themselves online, including their social media presence, online activities, and virtual interactions.

Genocide and Identity : The Interplay

Culturally, genocide aims to erase the collective memory and cultural heritage of targeted groups. Cultural practices, languages, and traditions that once defined these communities may be deliberately eradicated in an attempt to annihilate their identity. The loss of cultural artifacts and historical records means that survivors and future generations are deprived of a tangible connection to their roots.

Tito Ganju
Chairman, JIGAS

Identity is a complex and multi-dimensional concept that shapes the very essence of who individuals are and how they relate to the world around them. It encompasses a variety of factors, including cultural, ethnic, religious, and social dimensions, all of which contribute to a person's sense of self and belonging. Understanding identity is essential not only for individuals seeking to comprehend themselves but also for societies striving to foster inclusivity and cohesion.

At its core, identity can be seen as a collection of characteristics that define an individual or group and distinguish them from others. These characteristics may include shared values, traditions, languages, and experiences that tie individuals together into distinct communities. Identity is not fixed; rather, it evolves over time through interactions, experiences, and self-reflection.

One prominent perspective on identity comes from psychologist Erik Erikson, who introduced the concept of identity crisis as a key developmental stage in adolescence. According to Erikson, individuals go through a process of identity formation, where they grapple with questions about who they are, what they believe, and where they belong. This process continues throughout life, as people navigate various life stages and encounter new challenges.

The importance of identity lies in its profound influence on how individuals perceive themselves and how they relate to others. A strong and positive sense of identity can enhance self-esteem, confidence, and overall well-being. It provides a sense of continuity and stability in a rapidly changing world. On the other hand, a lack of identity or a negative self-concept can lead to feelings of confusion, alienation, and even mental health issues.

In societies characterized by diversity, identity plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion. People often form bonds with others who share similar identities, leading to the creation of communities that provide support and a sense of belonging. However, identity can also be a source of division and conflict when differences are perceived as threats. This duality highlights the delicate balance between celebrating diversity and nurturing a collective identity that transcends individual differences.

The concept of identity becomes especially pertinent in discussions about multiculturalism and globalization. As people from different backgrounds interact and coexist, questions about preserving cultural heritage while embracing shared values arise. Balancing the need for cultural identity with the desire for harmonious coexistence requires thoughtful dialogue and understanding.

Identity is not just an individual construct; it also shapes collective narratives and societal norms. It influences how history is remembered, how stories are told, and how social norms are established. Recognizing the power of identity narratives, societies can work to acknowledge diverse perspectives and challenge historical injustices that may have suppressed certain identities.

Educational institutions and social initiatives play a vital role in shaping how identity is perceived and valued. By incorporating diverse perspectives into curricula and promoting intercultural understanding, societies can promote empathy and tolerance. Teaching individuals to respect and appreciate different identities from a young age can contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious world.

Genocide's Impact on Identity: The Threads of Loss and Survival

Genocide, as one of the most devastating forms of human violence, leaves an indelible mark not only on the physical landscape but also on the collective and individual identities of the targeted groups. The profound and lasting impact of genocide on identity is a complex interplay of psychological, cultural, and social repercussions that reverberate across generations.

Psychologically, the trauma experienced by survivors of genocide has far-reaching effects on their sense of self and identity. The horrors witnessed and endured during genocidal acts often lead to profound emotional scars, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. These mental health challenges can disrupt individuals' ability to maintain a coherent sense of self, as their identity becomes entangled with the traumatic memories of the past.

Survivors also grapple with the loss of family members, friends, and entire communities. This loss of loved ones and the destruction of familiar social structures can fragment individuals' identities, leaving them feeling isolated and adrift. As they struggle to rebuild their lives and make sense of the atrocities they endured, survivors may experience a crisis of identity, questioning who they are and how they fit into a world that has been forever altered.

Culturally, genocide aims to erase the collective memory and cultural heritage of targeted groups. Cultural practices, languages, and traditions that once defined these communities may be deliberately eradicated in an attempt to annihilate their identity. The loss of cultural artifacts and historical records means that survivors and future generations are deprived of a tangible connection to their roots. This cultural void can further exacerbate feelings of displacement and identity loss.

However, the resilience of survivors and their descendants often leads to efforts to preserve and reclaim their identity. Through acts of remembrance, such as establishing memorials and museums, these communities honor the memory of those lost and ensure that the world does not forget the atrocities committed. Cultural practices that managed to survive the genocide become symbols of resistance and resilience, helping to rebuild a sense of identity.

Socially, genocide can rupture the social fabric of a society, leading to distrust and division. Survivors may be stigmatized or marginalized, experiencing discrimination due to their identity as survivors. In some cases, survivors may even grapple with guilt or shame, questioning why they survived when others did not. These complex social dynamics further complicate the process of identity reconstruction.

Yet, despite the profound challenges, many survivors and their descendants find ways to forge new identities that integrate the past with the present. The act of sharing stories, whether through oral history or written testimonies, becomes a means of preserving collective memory and passing down the legacy of resilience. By connecting with others who share similar experiences, survivors can find a sense of belonging and validation that helps them reconstitute their fractured identities.

Cultural practices and traditions also play a pivotal role in the process of identity reconstruction. Even in the face of overwhelming loss, communities often find strength in reviving and preserving their cultural expressions. Dance, music, storytelling, and art become ways of reclaiming their identity and asserting their existence. These cultural elements serve as living testaments to the endurance of their heritage and the resilience of their spirit. The interplay between collective memory and identity reconstruction extends beyond the community level..

Identity as a Catalyst for Genocide: The Dangerous Dynamics

Identity, being the fundamental aspect of human existence, has the potential to both unify and divide societies. In some tragic instances, differences in identity have been exploited as catalysts for genocide, a harrowing testament to the dark side of humanity's propensity to categorize and discriminate. Examining the intricate relationship between identity and genocide offers crucial insights into the mechanisms that drive such heinous acts of violence.

At its core, identity encompasses a range of characteristics that individuals use to define themselves and to distinguish one group from another. These characteristics can include cultural, ethnic, religious, and national affiliations. While these facets of identity can foster a sense of belonging and pride, they can also become sources of division when differences are used as justifications for superiority or persecution.

Nationalism and ethnocentrism, driven by the desire to uphold one's own identity over others, are frequently manipulated to fuel genocidal actions. History bears witness to numerous cases where political leaders and propagandists have exploited these sentiments to rally support for the extermination of perceived "others." The infamous Rwandan Genocide is a grim illustration of how the manipulation of ethnic identity, between the Hutu and Tutsi populations, served as a pretext for violence on a mass scale.

Dehumanization is another psychological mechanism intertwined with identity that facilitates genocidal acts. By stripping individuals of their humanity and emphasizing their perceived differences, perpetrators can rationalize brutality and violence. This process occurs through the construction of derogatory labels and stereotypes, which further entrench divisions between groups and legitimize acts of cruelty.

Religious identity, often a deeply personal and cherished aspect of an individual's sense of self, has also been used as a catalyst for genocide. Instances such as the Holocaust, where six million Jews were systematically exterminated, exemplify how differences in religious beliefs can be weaponized to justify mass killings so we're Kashmiri Pandits hounded out of their native land Kashmir.The perpetrators propagated narratives that portrayed their victims as threats to the dominant religious or cultural group.

Genocides are often perpetrated within the context of broader power struggles, where identity is leveraged to garner support and loyalty. Leaders manipulate identity to consolidate power, distract from underlying socioeconomic issues, or to redirect blame for societal challenges onto a vulnerable group. This use of identity as a tool of control highlights its potential to be exploited for political gain and the consolidation of authority.

The digital age has added new dimensions to the role of identity in genocide. Social media platforms and online communities can amplify existing prejudices and facilitate the spread of hateful ideologies. Cyber propaganda disseminates messages that reinforce divisions and dehumanize targeted groups, potentially accelerating the process of identity-based violence.

Recognizing the potent role of identity in catalyzing genocide underscores the urgency of promoting intercultural understanding, tolerance, and empathy. Education plays a pivotal role in combating the distortion of identity for malicious purposes. By fostering critical thinking and promoting respect for diverse identities, societies can build resilience against the forces that seek to exploit divisions.

Collective Memory and Identity Reconstruction: Weaving the Threads of Resilience

In the aftermath of genocidal atrocities, the survivors and affected communities are left not only with the burden of grief but also with the profound challenge of reconstructing their shattered identities. Collective memory, intertwined with the preservation of cultural heritage, emerges as a powerful tool in this process of identity reconstruction. As communities endeavor to heal and rebuild, the act of remembering and preserving their past becomes a beacon of hope, resilience, and a means to forge a renewed sense of identity.

Collective memory refers to the shared recollections of a community's history, culture, and experiences. In the context of genocide, this memory often bears the weight of trauma and loss. However, it also holds the key to honoring those who perished, bearing witness to the horrors endured, and passing down the legacy of resilience to future generations. Collective memory serves as a bridge between the past, present, and future, allowing survivors to reclaim their narratives and rebuild their sense of identity on their own terms.

Memorials and museums stand as physical manifestations of collective memory. They provide spaces where survivors and their descendants can come together to commemorate their losses and honor their heritage. Memorials serve as places of reflection, allowing individuals to connect with their history and find solace in shared sorrow. Museums curate artifacts, testimonies, and narratives that preserve the memory of the past, ensuring that the lessons learned from the tragedy are not forgotten.

These spaces not only serve as sites of remembrance but also as beacons of resistance. By actively engaging with their history and acknowledging their past, communities defy the attempts of perpetrators to erase their identity. The act of remembering becomes an act of defiance against those who sought to annihilate their culture and heritage. In this way, collective memory becomes a potent tool for identity reconstruction.

Cultural practices and traditions also play a pivotal role in the process of identity reconstruction. Even in the face of overwhelming loss, communities often find strength in reviving and preserving their cultural expressions. Dance, music, storytelling, and art become ways of reclaiming their identity and asserting their existence. These cultural elements serve as living testaments to the endurance of their heritage and the resilience of their spirit.

The interplay between collective memory and identity reconstruction extends beyond the community level. It holds the potential to foster empathy and understanding on a global scale. By sharing their stories and histories with the world, survivors contribute to a broader narrative of human rights, justice, and the consequences of unchecked hatred. These stories serve as a reminder that the consequences of genocide extend far beyond individual communities, reverberating through generations and across borders.

However, the act of remembering is not without its challenges. The trauma of genocide can distort memory, and the passing of time can blur the lines between truth and myth. The role of survivors as witnesses and storytellers becomes critical in preserving an accurate and nuanced collective memory. Educators, historians, and scholars also have a role in ensuring that the memory of genocide remains accurate and untainted by revisionism.

Identity Trap, Identity Games and Genocide in Kashmir

Genocide does not become possible unless an ingroup dehumanizes the outgroup and the identity of the outgroup is not considered worth sustaining. The outgroup is taken out of the sphere of moral obligation of the ingroup. Now ingroup is free to do anything to the outgroup. Dehumanizing and devaluing words are used for the members of the outgroup and the hatred for the outgroup intensifies. This shows that identity comes first in the process of genocide and then hatred comes in to make the difference between the communities sharper and sharper.

Dr. Dileep Kumar Kaul
Director, JIGAS

Classification is a common feature of our everyday life. People are always classified into different groups. Each group has its own ideology and moral sphere through which it is decided that who is in the group and who is not. This creates different group identities. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Communists or the classification of people into members of different political parties are some classifications used in our daily lives. But such classifications, as everyone of us knows do not lead to genocide.

Genocide essentially involves two group identities—ingroup and outgroup. But that is not all. Genocide does not become possible unless an ingroup dehumanizes the outgroup and the identity of the outgroup is not considered worth sustaining. The outgroup is taken out of the sphere of moral obligation of the ingroup. Now ingroup is free to do anything to the outgroup. Dehumanizing and devaluing words are used for the members of the outgroup and the hatred for the outgroup intensifies. This shows that identity comes first in the process of genocide and then hatred comes in to make the difference between the communities sharper and sharper.

The outgroup is visualized as a threat to the existence of the ingroup. If we take the example of Kashmir in 1990 the conflict has been between the Kashmiri Muslim identity and India. There has been a narrative rooted in the past about this conflict. The narrative was afloat that India, in Kashmir is an occupational force. An extremist language had always been in place for India. Terrorist groups began direct physical confrontation with Indian forces in 1990. Indian soldiers were killed and so were Kashmiri Pandits selectively for their inclination towards India. Kashmiri Pandits were always considered an Indian presence in Kashmir and they were being killed. They thought that mighty Indian Army will pin down the terrorists but that was not going to happen. The confrontations of Muslim terrorists with Indian army continued. The Kashmiri Muslim narrative of grievances against India became known all over the world. Kashmiri Pandits protested against their forced migration all over India in the attempt to establish their victim identity.

All this further sharpened and intensified the distinction of identities between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. An identity trap had been created. Kashmiri Pandit identity was already a symbol of the occupational Indian force, an infidel **"Kafir force."** That is why the popular slogan in Kashmir in 1990 was **"Ae Kafiro Ae Zalimo, Kashmiri Hamara Chhod do.(O cruel infidels, go away from our Kashmir)"** This was a message for Indian state as well as the Kashmiri Pandits. Kafir was a word of symbolization as well as dehumanization because it is the worst possible derogatory, dehumanizing epithet in Islamic society. The narrative of a long list of grievances with India was circulated all over the world and the identity trap became more and more formidable. If a Kashmiri Muslim wanted to resolve the issue through some kind of reconciliation it was impossible for him to do that and so was the case for Kashmiri Pandits. The identity trap was so powerful that it was impossible to escape it. It was easy for the perpetrators to deal with the issue through physical elimination of the victim.

Special slogans were created to strengthen the identity trap. These slogans were carefully structured to direct the attention of the listeners on the issue that India was an occupational force and Kashmiris as a persecuted collective need to get freedom from India. The freedom struggle narrative of Azadi was created that brought about the intersection of the Muslim identity with the freedom struggle identity. This enabled a different identity game. For the world the conflict in Kashmir could be projected as freedom struggle from clutches of India while as the Muslim identity was already there to achieve the goal of Islamisation. This intersection of identities can be well understood by analyzing the primary slogan of Kashmiri Muslims in 1990. The slogan was in three sentences:

1. **Hum kya chahte? Azadi!** (What do we want? Freedom!)
2. **Azadi ka Matlab Kya? Lailah illilah!** (What does freedom mean? Lailah illilah! There is one God and that is Allah.)
3. **Pakistan se Rishta kya? Lailah illilah!** (What is our relation with Pakistan? Lailah illilah!)

The first part of the slogan puts forth a very sacred motive of freedom, obviously from some atrocious hegemonic force. But no! This freedom has a different meaning. It means the Islamic principle of there is only one God and that is Allah. It is naturally against anyone who does not believe in Allah. So, a freedom fighter identity and Islamic fighter identity intersect here. But that is not all. Lailah illilah connects the struggle with Pakistan which is an Islamic country. Through the intersection of the freedom fighter and Islamic fighter identities, the aim is to change the place identity of Kashmir. The place identity is the extent to which dwelling in a place defines who a person is and to what extent he is different from other people who live at other places. So Kashmiri identity will be defined through the intersection of it with Pakistani identity. This obviously left no option for Kashmiri Pandits who would have no place in Pakistanized Kashmir. So the attention of the listener was focused on three intersecting identities, all associated with the perpetrator group. These identities were the salvation identities for the perpetrator group and obviously destructive for the victim group.

This along with other slogans put a lot of squeeze on Kashmiri Pandit victims especially on their familial identities. If we take the above-mentioned slogan along with another slogan we can understand the thoroughness of linguistic strategies to strengthen the identity trap. The slogan is:

Asi gachi Asun Pakistan. Batav ros tu batnyav san. (We wish to make Pakistan here, but without batas, the male Kashmiri Pandits and with batnis their women)

After this there was no possibility of negotiation. It was a warning to Kashmiri Pandit males who had the familial identities of fathers, brothers, sons, husbands that women will be taken and they can do nothing. When the intentions of taking the women as sex slaves were expressed openly through slogans there was nothing more to understand about the moral identity of the perpetrator community. All familial identities of the males of the victim community were left with no option but to leave Kashmir for the honour their women. This game of shuffling of identities was brilliantly played by the perpetrators of genocide in Kashmir.

In Kashmir the identity trap had bigger dimensions.

It is apt here to mention the killing of Mohammad Ayub Pandit who was mob-lynched in Kashmir on 22 June 2017. He was a police officer on duty in Jama Masjid Srinagar. Someone recognized him and people charged at him. It is said that a scuffle ensued in which his I-card fell from his pocket. Someone saw his surname "Pandit" and mob-lynching was the result. The "Pandit" surname showed his Kashmiri Pandit past which represented his historical identity. His forefathers had converted and over the generations he was named Mohammad Ayub but the Pandit tag of the surname remained with the name most probably to signal to the people that a Pandit had converted to Islam. But generations after the same surname the same history killed the cop. This is the most unique example of Kashmiri Pandit genocide and a rare example of the interplay of genocide and identity. This shows the power of the identity trap.

It becomes clear that identity traps are created through language. They can be countered through language. It is to be made clear to the perpetrator community in Kashmir that it is their history that they have been victims of the same ideology

Kashmiri Pandits were a local, immediate "other" who had a minority identity. This minority identity had always been an unsettling challenge for the Muslim majority community of Kashmir. Kashmiri Muslims knew that when Kashmiri Pandits are hounded out they will go to Hindu majority India. Hindu majority was already synonymous with Hindu India. Hindus of India, for Kashmiri Muslims were the larger "other." The immediate other (Kashmiri Pandits) were thrown out into an ocean of Indian Hindus, where they could not, but get dissolved and lose their unique, cultural, political and social power. This happened and it was now Muslim Kashmir vs Hindu India. This I call "Uproot and Implant strategy" is the most successful strategy employed by the perpetrators of genocide in Kashmir to manipulate identities. Kashmiri Pandits have been uprooted and implanted in a larger Hindu "other" thus catching that Hindu other in another "identity trap" which keeps alive the confrontation between Muslim Kashmir and Hindu India. The forced migration of Kashmiri Pandits altered the place identity of Kashmir. Kashmir became a completely Islamised region of India.

The present Indian government is trying to break this identity trap through focusing on development issues. But development issues will not work much when the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits is complete. There is a temporal aspect to this matter. More than three decades have passed since Kashmiri Pandits have left Kashmir. Over these three decades their voice has weakened significantly while as the Kashmiri Muslim voice is the voice of command over Kashmir which in fact they have over Kashmir.

Here, it is apt to refer to identity games that were played to create the genocidal environment. A very potent identity game was the game of "Kashmiriyat." Kashmiriyat was a past-based narrative that put forth the idea that Hindus and Muslims had been living in Kashmir in complete congeniality and harmony. But it eliminated the fact that how did Kashmir a Hindu majority region become a totally Muslim majority region. If there was any harmony in Kashmir at all, it was at the mercy of the majority Muslim community who could shatter it at will. Shatter they did, from time to time and they ultimately destroyed it in 1990. The history of Kashmiri Pandit genocide was totally eliminated from the Kashmiriyat narrative. It very subtly strengthened the identity trap in which Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims, both were caught. It maintained the hegemonic identity of Kashmiri Muslims that naturally kept intact the subordinate identity of Kashmiri Pandits. The narrative of Kashmiriyat was the narrative of historical dementia. It made Kashmiri Pandits to forget their historical victimhood. But it also made the Kashmiri Muslim community oblivious of the historical fact that all of them were converted under the shadow of sword and other forms of coercion and duress to an ideology that made them forget their victimhood and turned them into perpetrators of genocide on the very people who somehow managed to escape conversion in the past. This could make way for an environment of reason and understanding.

It is apt here to mention the killing of Mohammad Ayub Pandit who was mob-lynched in Kashmir on 22 June 2017. He was a police officer on duty in Jama Masjid Srinagar. Someone recognized him and people charged at him. It is said that a scuffle ensued in which his I-card fell from his pocket. Someone saw his surname "Pandit" and mob-lynching was the result. The "Pandit" surname showed his Kashmiri Pandit past which represented his historical identity. His forefathers had converted and over the generations he was named Mohammad Ayub but the Pandit tag of the surname remained with the name most probably to signal to the people that a Pandit had converted to Islam. But generations after the same surname the same history killed the cop. This is the most unique example of Kashmiri Pandit genocide and a rare example of the interplay of genocide and identity. This shows the power of the identity trap.

It becomes clear that identity traps are created through language. They can be countered through language. It is to be made clear to the perpetrator community in Kashmir that it is their history that they have been victims of the same ideology they are fighting for. A perpetrator most of the time works on the basis of a unidimensional identity. But there are many dimensions of an identity. Ghulam Hassan Sofi the great blind singer or Kashmir is loved by all, irrespective of caste, creed and colour. So was Ambreen Bhat, a TV actress and singer who was known for her identity as an artist but was killed by Islamists for the status quo established by them did not allow a girl to sing and act in plays. We need to understand that when we are conscious of the multidimensional identity of man, there are chances for different collectives to work together and become more comfortable with each other. But perpetrators are to be seen as perpetrators and laws need to be framed to punish them. As long as the identity of a criminal is not associated with the identity of a perpetrator his religious or other kind of identity may continue to lend sanctity to the acts of genocide committed by him and bodies of humans will keep falling on earth.

QnA with the scholars of JIGAS

Rinita Majumdar
Genocide Scholar

Please tell us a little bit about yourself

Currently I am a full time Instructor of Philosophy and Gender Studies at Central New Mexico Community College, Albuquerque, New Mexico and also an affiliate Prof. of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico. I taught in New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, New Mexico, St. Philips And Alamo Colleges in San Antonio Texas before this as a part time Philosophy Instructor.

I got my Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and my Master's in Philosophy from Canada and Calcutta University prior to that. I also have a degree in Psychology from the University of Phoenix. My research interest is Gender, colonialism, and psychoanalysis. I have published several books on Feminist and Gender theories such as Introduction To Feminist Theories, Understanding Gender, Feminine Sexuality, Feminist Manifesto, among others. I have also published a book of poems, Shiva's Dance in Albuquerque.

How did you hear about JIGAS and why did you apply for the Genocide studies program?

I heard about JIGAS from a Whatsapp group consisting of women who identify as Hindu. One of the members, Arti Agarwal, posted about JIGAS and the course in the group and I came to know about JIGAS.

A big part of my research includes research on colonization, violence on indigenous women, gender configuration and colonization, histories of indigenous people, and the effect of colonization on the people's psyche. As I also am interested in psychoanalysis, I look at colonial and gender oppression via the lens of psychoanalysis and how it has affected people across generations. This includes the trauma of people whose histories and memories are suppressed and erased from the public memory. I use feminist and psychoanalytic theories and hence for me this research is not only personal but also political. Before taking this course, I was doing a lot of reading on the untold histories of Bengali Hindu genocide, which is part of my own history. I was also in the process of translating a book called Noakhali from Bengali. The book gives detail account of different accounts of the genocide of the Hindus of East Bengal in 1946. In addition to the above research, I was also reading and hearing about the trauma of Native people of New Mexico. Like the people of East Bengali Hindus their land, cultural icons, and much of what they claimed as their names were taken away. There were several similarities between the two instances. First, neither the Hindus nor the Native Americans were willing to talk about their abuse and genocide; in both cases there was shame involved in talking about their murder and killing. With my knowledge of psychoanalysis, I tried to understand why the victims should be ashamed of their abuse, when they were not the perpetrators. Interestingly, this is what happens to women when they are violated, they somehow take it as their fault. So, with this research my knowledge of feminist theories, post-colonial theories and so forth were coming together.

Despite the above research, there were some loopholes in my research. What were they? I realized I had very vague ideas about some of the non-Western definitions of genocide and how different cultures look at ethnic cleansing and genocide. I was starting to look for scholarly material on these issues. When I came to know about JIGAS and that it will be offering a course on genocide, I thought I should take this course in order to expand my knowledge about the research and deepen my understanding of genocide.

What expectations did you have before you joined the program? Were those expectations met?

I expected to deepen my knowledge of what constitutes genocide, specifically, what motives one to commit genocide and if the psyche of people who commit genocide can be termed pathological. Also, I was hoping to learn about non-Western view of genocide. Certainly, the above expectations were met. For example, in one of the classes we learnt about the intention of the perpetrators of genocide, which was a very significant piece of information about genocide. Prior to this class, I read about Hannah Arendt's theory of genocide but had never heard of Lemkin or his theory. This course gave me that opportunity. Nonetheless, I think the most significant theoretician about whom I knew nothing was Jonaraja, a Kashmiri Pandit who continued the work of his predecessors by completing Rajtarangini, a historical account of the Monarchs of Kashmir. I found Jonaraja's theory of genocide most in line with psychoanalytic theory. Jonaraja talks about the psyche of the perpetrators as “childlike”, or immature. This resonates with psychoanalytic theory of some theorists where often pathology makes a person regress back into childhood. In addition, I think Jonaraja's depiction of the genocide as “Jatividhwansha” is an eye opener. The word “Jati” implies a community, which involves both some material as well as psychological elements. What is interesting is that Jonaraja compares this “vidhwansha” or total destruction with the uprooting of a tree. A tree has roots and branches, which are all destroyed. A tree has roots deep down in the earth, so this definition has an ecological sense, where what is connected to the earth is unearthed. This was stunning for me. For I have not thought of the uprooting of my people from East Bengal as a tree being uprooted from their roots, the earth, our shared homeland as a human being. When a tree is uprooted, it means a complete destruction of both the earth and the tree.

According to Heidegger, who lived during World War II and was at some point a member of the National Socialist Party which he left

later, talked about the human being as Dasein. The concept of Dasein is very important for us to think of genocide. According to Heidegger, depicts the human being as Dasein, a unique being who can raise questions about the meaning of his own existence, although he is bounded by space and time. Further, Dasein is intimately rooted in his background to the world, the ecology and culture. He related to this background with care and concern. Dasein chooses to forget the central question, the search for the meaning of his existence and hence when confronted with his own non-existence or destruction, he cannot make sense. What the term Jatividhwansa does is give us, the subsequent generation, this metaphysical inquiry into what is the meaning of all of this, if everything is going to be destroyed and we who are located in our background will be uprooted. As Freud said, we all grow mature via trauma, via loss, so one can say that Jatividhwansa the subsequent generation can learn and grow to understand the meaning of our culture and how we make sense of this absurdity of destruction. From what I read in the Mahabharata, the longest epic poem of the Hindu civilization, the question of so much destruction of the race was in the minds of the warring parties. From the askes grew a new kingdom and the establishment of Justice (Dharma)
Further, I can now understand the pathos of loss of homeland in some of the movies made on the partition, such as, Subarnarekha, by Ritwik Ghatak, where the uprooted East Bengali Hindu cannot make sense of his existence. The entire flux of refugees in India during partition, which changed the culture and demography of India forever can only be understood in the context of the genocide which is really Jatividhwasa that Jonaraja talked about and that we learned in this course. Also, now I can understand why my maternal grandfather and others in my mother's family were silent about their past existence, for their entire sense of morality and meaning of existence were jeopardized. We know that in therapy when the client is silent, there is some resistance at work, some trauma deep in the unconscious that is not letting him speak. After going through the course, all this is making much more sense to me.

What did you think about the curriculum that you were taught?

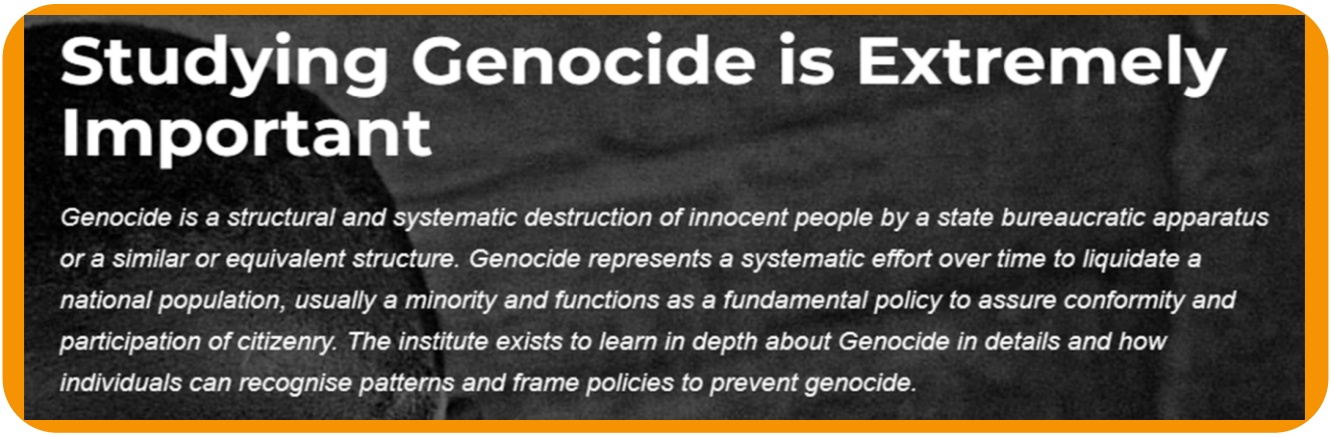
I think the curriculum was pretty comprehensive. Since the entire course lasted for six months, all unspoken genocides could not be taught. Nonetheless, the theoretical part covered the essential parts.

What kind of scholars do you think will benefit most from this program?

I think those pursuing studies in colonial and post-colonial disciplines, unspoken genocides, hidden histories and anthropologists would definitely benefit from these studies. In addition, people doing research on feminist and psychoanalytic theories would also benefit from this course. Further, those who are doing Peace Studies and studies in non-violence would benefit from this. Apart from this a whole lot of scholars in the humanities, behavioral, and social science could benefit from these studies.

Did the program empower you to speak about forgotten genocides on national and international platforms?

Certainly, this program will empower me about forgotten genocides. I am now realizing how this “forgetting” was because there was power that meant it to be forgotten, so that the intentionality of the perpetrator can be erased from history. While translating the book Noakhali and doing research on East Bengali genocide and ethnic cleansing of Hindus, apart from the framework of understanding genocides, I think one of the things I was missing was a sophisticated language to articulate what constitutes genocide, how different scholars have envisioned genocide, the psyche of the perpetrator, the role of intentionality in committing genocide. This course has given me that language that I was seeking for and I will use them for furthering my presentation of the different aspects of genocide. This course will especially help me to articulate a culturally different concept of genocide than those forwarded by the Western scholars, which often cannot be applied to the concepts of genocide and ethnic cleansing of Hindus or the indigenous tribes of North and South Americas, particularly, the psychological aspects. In much of the indigenous world there is no distinction between the “sacred” and the “secular” or between “faith” and “culture”. One's faith is expressed in terms of behavior, in everyday praxis. This is because their entire existence is also connected to all aspects of their lives. Jonaraja's metaphor of the uprooting of a tree gave me that insight and it can further my knowledge and understanding, which I can use to explain the deep-rooted view of what it is to genocide for people tied to their roots. This will certainly empower me to present the cases I am studying on national and international platforms.


Studying Genocide is Extremely Important
Genocide is a structural and systematic destruction of innocent people by a state bureaucratic apparatus or a similar or equivalent structure. Genocide represents a systematic effort over time to liquidate a national population, usually a minority and functions as a fundamental policy to assure conformity and participation of citizenry. The institute exists to learn in depth about Genocide in details and how individuals can recognise patterns and frame policies to prevent genocide.

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

Approved and proposed for signature and ratification or accession by General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) of 9 December 1948
Entry into force: 12 January 1951, in accordance with article XIII

The Contracting Parties,
Having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world, Recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and Being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required,

Hereby agree as hereinafter provided :

Article I
The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

Article II
In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;
(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article III
The following acts shall be punishable:
(a) Genocide;
(b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
(c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
(d) Attempt to commit genocide;
(e) Complicity in genocide.

Article IV
Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

Article V
The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention, and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article VI
Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.

Article VII
Genocide and the other acts enumerated in article III shall not be considered as political crimes for the purpose of extradition.
The Contracting Parties pledge themselves in such cases to grant extradition in accordance with their laws and treaties in force.

Article VIII
Any Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article IX
Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfilment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article III, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

Article X
The present Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall bear the date of 9 December 1948.

Article XI
The present Convention shall be open until 31 December 1949 for signature on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State to which an invitation to sign has been addressed by the General Assembly. The present Convention shall be ratified, and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. After 1 January 1950, the present Convention may be acceded to on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State which has received an invitation as aforesaid. Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article XII
Any Contracting Party may at any time, by notification addressed to the SecretaryGeneral of the United Nations, extend the application of the present Convention to all or any of the territories for the conduct of whose foreign relations that Contracting Party is responsible.

Article XIII
On the day when the first twenty instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited, the Secretary-General shall draw up a procès-verbal and transmit a copy thereof to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article XI. The present Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession. Any ratification or accession effected subsequent to the latter date shall become effective on the ninetieth day following the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession.

Article XIV
The present Convention shall remain in effect for a period of ten years as from the date of its coming into force. It shall thereafter remain in force for successive periods of five years for such Contracting Parties as have not denounced it at least six months before the expiration of the current period. Denunciation shall be effected by a written notification addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Article XV
If, as a result of denunciations, the number of Parties to the present Convention should become less than sixteen, the Convention shall cease to be in force as from the date on which the last of these denunciations shall become effective.

Article XVI
A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any Contracting Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary General. The General Assembly shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such request.

Article XVII
The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify all Members of the United Nations and the non-member States contemplated in article XI of the following:

(a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions received in accordance with article XI;
(b) Notifications received in accordance with article XII;
(c) The date upon which the present Convention comes into force in accordance with article XIII;
(d) Denunciations received in accordance with article XIV;
(e) The abrogation of the Convention in accordance with article XV;
(f) Notifications received in accordance with article XVI.

Article XVIII
The original of the present Convention shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.
A certified copy of the Convention shall be transmitted to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article XI.

Article XIX
The present Convention shall be registered by the Secretary-General of the United
Nations on the date of its coming into force.

(Reproduced from https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml)

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